

Traditions

b) Traditional practices throughout the year (266-293)

Just as the order of events in civic life had importance over the year, serving simultaneously as the fiscal period when farmers were kept in tension anticipating and analyzing their economic situation of the past and up-coming year, the beginning and the ending days of the year firmly stood in the light of Christmas. The Annunciation of the Redeemer is not at all about the fleeting matters of the world, not about transient happiness, but about the eternal bliss of mankind. This fact found its fallout also in the tradition to which our community had been committed at the beginning and ending of each year.

When the midday bell started to ring on the last day of the year – even today it rings for a whole hour – then the men and boys ran into the garden to bind ropes of straw that had been previously prepared around the trees. This way each tree received a girdle of straw. This was done in the belief that the trees would produce more fruit in the following summer. Old folk wisdom also spoke of the power of the words. So the binding up the trees, s. “buimbanjdan”, in such a way that first the rope of straw was tied to the tree about one meter above the ground, then it would be wound clockwise around the tree while reciting a small saying. Peculiarly this rhyme does not refer to the New Year, but to Christmas. It sounds like this: “Froat ix ir buim anj ux uiwan, dar Här Christus äs noa gebuiran!” It is used in vernacular and sounds in German: “Rejoice trees below and above, the Lord Christ is born again!” As it was once believed that the magic power of the word had an influence on the fruitfulness of the fruit trees, it is known today that the rope of straw is more effective because a number of vermin hide in the straw to escape the cold of the winter and will be burned together with the straw in the spring before it can do damage.

If the Christmas biscuits did not last until New Year the women were occupied with baking. Also the lunch meal for the next day was prepared on this day.

p. 267

It consisted most often of filled cabbage (Krautwickel) that in earlier times was placed on the glowing charcoals in the opening of the oven after the baking was finished to simmer at a steady heat. If it is not cabbage prepared with pork then it had to be another dish made with pork. In no case can the woman of the household serve chicken. She justifies this because chickens scratch in all directions and thus easily could bury or scatter the luck of the coming year. Pigs, on the contrary, constantly dig ahead with their snouts; therefore the economy will also go forward in the New Year if you eat pork on this day. This custom reflects an old remnant of Germanic mythology in which the pig, especially the male pig played a special role. It became a proverbial animal of good luck. According to J. Grimm's “German Mythology” the Dutch farmers meticulously fixed up their property for New Year. It was said that in this night “de Derk met de Beer”, that is the boar (Eber, s. Bir) would come to trample all agricultural tools loosely lying around. When in our days someone had been lucky to avoid a disaster one often hears the saying, commonly used in German folk language “He has had a pig – Er hat Schwein gehabt”. The word “pig” is used here instead of the word “luck”. This saying has the same mythological root as our dishes with pork, as has also the roasted suckling pig which is prepared in the cities on New Year's Eve.

In the evening the young people but also older men and women come together to celebrate “Sylvester (New Year's Eve) s. “Gor'sch Nuacht”, to remain awake, and experience the dawn of the New Year. The young people dance, the elders converse in serious and not so serious talk. When after the “Ausläuten” ringing of the bells for the last half hour of the old year, the clock tower announced the 12th hour. Then, with the “Einläuten” (ringing in) also lasting a half hour, the New Year begins. People shake hands with each other and wish one another good luck, health, and contentment. The next morning they greet everybody with the same wishes whom they not had met during the night.

Early the next morning the children are already on their way to carry the New Year's gift to the Christening children of their parents and present to their own parents good luck wishes in form of reciting a poem or singing a New Year's song. Impatiently the children wait for their entertainment which was called "Blasi" after the Catholic Saint Blasius, and which occurred on his day, February 3rd. At first this event had been reset for February 2nd. But when the schools came under state control, it could only be celebrated on the following Sunday, because Saint Mary's Day (Marienitag) no longer was a day off for the school. The Adjuvants play music for a small entrance fee, and the children dance to it. In between the roundelays the children sing and play and seek to behave exactly like the grown-ups whom they have observed at weddings. It is important for the little ones that the basket, that is located at the feet of the mother watching the activities, contains several pieces of desirable pastries that can be consumed during the breaks.

The anticipation of adults awaiting the Carnival (Fasching) s. Fuasnicht is no less. The preparations for it start already in the fall. Each neighbor contributes a specified quantity of "Most" (fruit juice). The amount is determined by the neighbors. Then the liquid is poured into a barrel to ferment in the basement of the neighborhood father. A new leadership of the neighborhood is elected every two years. It consists of the neighborhood fathers for the older and the younger group and two "Schaffners". Every neighborhood has its own neighborhood chest in which the books and the money of the neighborhood are preserved. It contains a number of articles concerning the neighborhood, the statutes and the book of protocols, into which the records are entered about the negotiations during the sessions. With the neighborhood father also rests the neighborhood insignia, a small wooden emblem cut in the form of a heart. On its backside is a small oblique strap under which a piece of paper is attached with a written instruction by the neighborhood father. When it is carried around from neighbor to neighbor it has to be carried forward immediately. The person who leaves this emblem lying around in his house will receive a penalty. In the past the carnival took place in the days before Ash Wednesday.

But even this had to be adapted to today's circumstances and thus was scheduled on a Saturday with the Sunday following, because the men could not take of work on weekdays.

Nothing in our village community happened without the necessary seriousness. Therefore the first day of it is called Day of Judgment. If necessary a court is held. Defaulters who had not complied with orders of the neighborhood paid the agreed-upon penalty. All concerns of the neighborhood are discussed during the "Thing", decisions made and recorded in the book of proceedings. For this day the neighborhoods prepare themselves in a communal religious service of reconciliation s. "Varsuinungskirich" after which everyone goes to their own neighborhood, which is the house of the neighborhood father. But on this day the house is at the disposal of the community. When the business affairs are completed the "Schaffner" goes to the basement and gets a sample of the wine to be judged. After that everyone goes home for lunch. After one hour they meet again for conversations with a glass of wine until supper. This much remained from the old custom of "Männerfasching", which was celebrated under exclusion of women. It also is still called "Mauuna fuasnicht". After women had obtained equal status socially and were recognized as equals even in the smallest village the further course of the festival was celebrated together. Thus all men and women come together in the evening for supper after which they have a good time with dance, singing, maybe a small comical sketch. At midnight the festivities end so that everyone can attend the service on Sunday. The reconciliation service on the day before was only for the men, but everyone can attend the Sunday service. With three communal meals the entertainment continues until early Monday morning. After a short sleep the women and a few men meet again at the communal house to get it back in order, clean, and reassemble the furniture in their original arrangement.

p. 270

When this was done, then – like in the Middle Rhine the winter was expelled – the carnival (Fasching) was buried. A straw puppet on a cart was driven through the village. At a time when one still could celebrate and were not yet burdened by war and its oppressive consequences the participants put on masks for the parade. They put a cooking stove on the wagon, made a fire, stirred dough in a big bowl and baked delicious pancakes on their ride through the village which were thrown to the on-lookers on the roadside. The masquerade followed the wagon with music, a lot of noise, and joking. On the sidewalk all children of the village followed them, which was not surprising because they saw the adults like that only once a year. This fun was their non-disputable share in the Fasching celebration. On the bridge at the New Alley the procession stopped. A masked person addressed the audience with a speech of mourning about the Fasching that had now ended either in prose or in form of a poem. Adolf Buchholter who emigrated to Canada has captured such a poem in his Memories of Grosskopisch . It sounds like this:

In the blooming of two days
You already are carried to your grave.
Oh, you poor Fasching, goes
so early to your rest.
But you will not lie there in eternity,
And you will not get lame legs.
You have no time for that.
Short is your eternity.
Even as we bury you today,
a year is not going to hurt you.
After that you will be here again
And we dance anew!

Then the straw doll was burned on the bridge, a sign that the self-conscious folly had found its end. The sub-conscious, however, stretched itself without end through all times.

On the following Sunday the men came together one more time in the Community House. The Neighborhood father gave an account about the revenues and expenditures of the last year.

p. 271

If his period of office of two-years had passed a new election took place and the content of the neighborhood chest was handed over to his successor. Then the chest was locked and the key was given to the newly elected official. The Schaffner then took the chest under his arm and began his way to the new neighbor's house. The old and the new officials and all the neighbors followed him. The last ones carried the long tables and benches which had been procured for these conventions and which were kept by the Neighborhood Father. The new honor cost the new Neighborhood Father a drink of wine. The Neighborhood Mother brought a whole trough of "Krapfen" (donuts), which she had baked in foresight and placed them on the table with the friendly invitation to help themselves.

Most of the time snow was still on the roofs but the chickadees had already begun to sing a song of spring. With the same urge with which the bird sang the farmer waited for the sun of March so that he could go on with his work.

On Ash Wednesday the chaplain no longer sprinkles ash on the heads of his believers to mark the beginning of Lent, but not only had the day kept its name, but also its significance as the day when the path of the Lord's suffering and the period of fasting starts. All entertainments are abandoned, it is a quiet time. Older men and women fast two days a week, on Wednesday and Friday in memory of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. In the awareness of human sinfulness this happens with inner reflection, hidden from the outside, without becoming morose, so that one cannot say from the outside how many feel this way inside.

A week before Palm Sunday, that is on the Sunday Judica, called this way after the beginning of the entrance saying "Judge me, Lord, with your justice", (lat. "Judica me...") a special custom is practiced. It has the name "Dat schuin Maidchan", that is, "The beautiful Maiden". A girl, three or four years old, is decorated with colorful silk ribbons and a crown. The girl's hair hangs loose over her back, chest and shoulders. Two older school girls take her hands and go from house to house followed by all the girls.

In front of the door they sing a song of spring, for example "Nun will der Lenz uns grüssen..."(Now spring wants to greet us...). The words are rooted in verses by Neidhart von Reuental, who died approximately in 1250. The melody stems from a round dance of the 17th century. Both shall be recorded here in this text:

Now spring wants to greet us,
from the south a breeze blows,
from all corners flowers sprout in red and blue
from which the brown heather
weaved a very fine gown
and invited in festive garb
to the dance in May.

Birds in the wood sing songs
You would like to hear
So get up to leaps of joy
The journey is worth gold
Hi, under green linden
White dresses shine!
Hiah, now for us children
Suffering of winter has ended.

Another song is printed here with words and melody, but in the local idiom. (skipped)

When the door opens, the inhabitants come out, and when the song by the girls is finished and they say: "Sedj gebaden arluist as des gang Kenangan and giat ar an kluin Gauv!" In German it sounds like: "Please, redeem this young queen and give her a small gift".

p. 274

Upon this request they get flour, sugar, fat, and eggs. Some mothers then bake "Krapfen" to be eaten in the evening by the children in the house of the beautiful girl. The parade was attended only by the girls, but boys were allowed to come and to eat Krapfen and play.

This tradition is reminiscent of historic pagan times. Based on old beliefs one could see well-dressed virgins in the gaps of the rocks and on the mountains at the time of Easter, the time when spring was coming. They were to memorize the goddess of spring Ostara (J.Grimm mythology). From there stem the white dresses, the decoration of flowers and the golden crown with which the girls are adorned, but also the timing of the parade. This gesture of the girls addressing the adults by pleading to release the young queen is touching. They are supposed to help freeing the girl from the shackles of the rigid, heartless winter. This custom also reminds us about the banishment of winter celebrated on the Middle Rhine and in the "Odenwald" (mountainous region in Germany) which is celebrated on the Sunday Laetare. The parade with the 'Beautiful Maiden' takes place on the Sunday Judica, one week before Palm Sunday. This occurs between March 11 and April 8, depending when Easter is celebrated. With certainty the beginning of spring also falls into this time span. This first Sunday after the beginning of spring received a special name because of this traditional custom. It was called the "Strong Sunday". Perhaps one wanted to express that by its strength it decisively contributed to the victory of spring, to the release of the young queen. This tradition has remained intact through centuries of Christian life style.

On Palm Saturday the boys carry branches of fir to the girls, recently also wreaths, adorned with colorful silk ribbons. On the morning of Palm Sunday these were put on the front side of the house by the fathers of the girls. The houses then remain decorated for many weeks. Often one also sees whole mistletoe plants festooned with silk bands on the walls of the house. With the "Germanen" (old German tribe) the mistletoe plant had a high standing as a plant of luck.

p. 275

Even today it is used at Christmas time to decorate the rooms in Nordic countries and also in England. This happens in the belief that during the "Lostage"(December 26 until January 6) when a twig of mistletoe is hanging in the room, dreams become true. This brings up the question whether the mistletoes on the walls of the Saxon houses are only reminders of the palm fronds that were spread on the way as Christ entered Jerusalem or, if according to old pagan lore, mistletoes also served as harbingers of good luck and protection from lightning, disease, and bad magic.

The boys receive colored eggs at Easter for the branches, wreaths, or mistletoes when they spray the girls with good-smelling water (rose water) on the second day of Easter. In the afternoon they go to a meadow near the village, throw with eggs in mock competition and eat them.

In the night before Palm Sunday the young men also decorated the houses of their loved-ones with green fir branches. Several large branches were placed in front of the windows of the gable. For that they also received colored

eggs as they went to spray the young women. For this task several lads of the same age armed with vials of perfume went in the afternoon to the girls, with whom they had gone to the spinning rooms in the winter, and sprayed them. On this occasion they were treated with pastries and drink. In earlier times this tradition took place in the morning before the church service. There some young men had to announce a penalty for sleeping in church or a greater lapse at the next access to church service. Before the rose water was known the young ladies were not allowed to show themselves on the street, because the young gentlemen would catch them, place them into a fountain trough or pour whole buckets of water over them and then let them free. It was said that because of it extraordinary beautiful hemp would grow on their fields in the following summer. Therefore no girl should feel hurt but pay their duty for this water treatment in colored eggs. They also had the right to spray the young men with water at no cost on the following morning.

p. 276

With finer clothing also finer traditions developed. The pouring of water on each other is no longer practiced. Changes also occurred with the spraying of rose water. It was now planned for the afternoon. For this the young women meet at the place of one of them, prepare eggs, pastries and drinks, wait there for the young men and all have a good time until the evening.

A popular tradition for the young men, even today, is the "Eierablaufen" (egg run) on the third day of Easter, which is held even if not everyone can participate because they are forced to work due to the changed circumstances. They can be there for a short time after work to take a part in the entertainment which follows the event. At this point I let again Heinrich Bratz speak as to how the egg run took place around 1877 when it was incorporated into the brotherhood of Grosskopisch. He described it in the following way:

"With the collected eggs a betting game was arranged which had the following course: In a sunny alley holes were dug out along two rows, like railroad tracks, about the length a foot apart. The holes had about the depth of a nest. Into each nest an egg was placed. In the presence of the brotherhood and many curious onlookers, three young men stepped in front of the "Altknecht" (senior farmhand) and set the conditions for the bet. One of the three was supposed to collect the eggs, while the other two each had to retrieve a knife that had been placed on a specified place on top of the two mountains next to the village. The first had to collect the eggs by starting at the end of one row, kneel down before each egg, take it into his mouth and then run with five eggs, two in each hand and one in the mouth, and place them on a tablecloth spread out by two boys at the end of the row. Each row of eggs was assigned to one picker. After placing the eggs on the table cloth he was to run back, pick up another five eggs and carry them to the table.

p. 277

While the young man picking up the eggs carried out his arduous task the other two young men climbed up their mountains towards their goal. One could watch the two climbers from the alley. Soon it sounded from the audience: "Look, the Dynz/Andreas already has arrived on the ridge of the mountain, he is going to win the bet! You, Eggman, hurry up!" Others called out: "The Marz already is running down!" But usually the lad picking up the eggs won the bet.

The loser of the bet had to donate as much wine as had been betted upon to the brotherhood. When the eggs had been cooked by the foreman father of the farm helpers, they were consumed with the wine for lunch by all".

Adolf Buchner wrote in detail more about the betting system. In his writings it states: "If one of the mountain runners returned early he could help the man picking up the eggs, but the eggs that he picked belonged to him and were lost to the egg picker who then also lost a portion of the bet. If both mountain runners returned early, the picker not only

lost the eggs the runners could pick up, and for which he had to pay the brotherhood along with the eggs that had broken during the pick-up. He also lost both bets, one with the brotherhood and the bet with the mountain runners. When one of the mountain runners returned after the eggs had all been picked up, he lost the bet with the brotherhood and the other bet with the second egg picker plus the bet which the two mountain runners had set between the two of them. If both mountain runners came too late they both had lost all three bets. However the bets came out the brotherhood always remained the winner!"

Buchholzer also writes about the tradition of "Shooting the Rooster" which was supposed to have taken place after the egg run. After the First World War owning any type of gun was strictly prohibited and the guns people owned were confiscated. Therefore this tradition ended. This way one brutality had been tossed out of this world, and this did not hurt people.

After the Second World War the egg run was modified. The two runners no longer have to climb up to the mountains, but run in opposite directions around the portion of the village where Saxons live.

p. 278

Also no bets were made with wine, because the farmers no longer own vineyards. Some of the collected eggs were sold to buy beverages with the money. With the rest of the eggs a large egg dish s. "Fontchuch" is prepared and the young men have a good time together until the evening. Only rarely this will occur later, because on the evening before a theater performance had been staged with a dance following. Also many already had to work on the day of the egg run or had little interest in this event.

The first of May is celebrated in Romania in grand style as the day of the work. The workers in industry have two full days off, for which they had to work for two preceding Sundays so that the target objectives of the Plan would be fulfilled. Whoever is able, moves to the countryside to relatives living there and celebrate the festival with friends in order to escape the annoying parades that are held in the cities. If the weather is good they take a trip to a scenic place within the region of the village, talk to each other and reminisce about their happy childhoods, during which they lived here. But even at an earlier time this day had been celebrated with a certain solemnity, although not everyone participated. Shortly before sunrise adjuvants climbed the hill on the western edge of the community as the sun rose over the eastern mountains and they sang the hymn: "Wie schön strahlt uns der Morgenstern, voll Gnad' und Wahrheit von dem Herr uns herrlich aufgegangen..." (How beautiful the morning star shines, full of grace and truth of the Lord, arisen for us...). The youth and the school children who went with them - nobody wanted to miss this - sang three verses of the text by Philipp Nicolai, from 1599. After this they sang: "Der Mai ist gekommen..." (May has come), and two joyful dance tunes sounded through the whole village. Then everyone came to the community house and delivered a serenade to the chaplain and the administrative staff for which they received a drink. After that the adults went to work. The school children, however, made a trip through the fields and woods of the regional neighborhood if the weather was nice. Thus the day passed in no time with song and play.

p. 279

The holiday of Pentecost contained a special tradition concerning the "Maibäume" (trees of May) which the young men got from the woods the evening before. Late in the evening one could hear them work digging deep holes in the ground to stand up the slim birches in front of the houses of the young women. In the morning the small white stems shone in the morning sun. If one went into the church one also saw that it was decorated with the delicate green of

birches, so that the altar was barely visible. At the place where at Christmas the great fir tree stood, now a large birch tree had been placed. At the end of the benches of the middle row branches were attached with their tips bent towards each other so that a green arc was formed over a narrow passage. The aromatic smell of the leaves gave a special spicy note to the festival. On this occasion the residents still considered the woods as community property although the forest had long been taken over by the state. This is being considered only to the extent that one has to bend to coercion. If the young men were to be caught they would be punished as forest criminals.

At Pentecost not only the green of nature was brought to the people, but people also went out into nature with their amusements. For this purpose several dance floors in the woods had been prepared close to the village.

If the weather was constant and nice, young and old went up on the "Burgkoppe", to which a serpentine foot path led through a small copse of pine trees, laid out and kept in order by the brotherhood. Another place for dancing was in Hillenbusch, above the Rättsch. But if the weather was questionable, people stayed below the Burgkoppe. This was very close to protection provided by the houses when the weather spoiled the plans for dancers and on-lookers. After the Luther House was finished there finally was a long-wished for and dignified place of refuge. But after one and a half years after its construction it was confiscated. The Burgkoppe and the trail to it became overgrown with wild shrubbery, and the dance place in Hillenbusch became designated as the dump of the village. These were all signs of a new era that began for us, one that could not be misunderstood.

p.280

When one finally regained some courage to think about entertainment, it was set for the evening of the first Easter holiday. For this occasion the communal hall, called "Kulturheim" (home for the culture) was rented from the new owner, the "Gemeinderat" (council for the community) and an application was submitted to schedule an event. This was only granted if the performances were held in two languages. During the presentations in Romanian language and the preceding speech about a political topic the hall was quiet. But as soon as the German group appeared a wave of restless lack of understanding and lack of discipline broke out across the hall which turned the evening into a torture for the Saxons. Such behavior they had not known until now. They felt they had been robbed of their freedom and their dignity was dishonored. At a later time they were allowed separate German meetings. Yes, in the time following "folklore" was even written in large letters. Folk songs, traditional costumes, and folk dances were cultivated. It was too late, because the offices for issuing passports had already been overcrowded.

The next festival in the year was the "Kronenfest" (feast of the crown), that was celebrated on the 29th of June, Peter and Paul's Day. When it was celebrated again in the time after the Second World War, after a break of many years, it had to be reset on the Sunday next to it. The first crown in the time after the war was torn down the next morning by a party activist and a farmer of the "Kollektiv". They took a chain attached it to two oxen and hauled the crown to a farmyard of the collective. This act of violence was silently accepted. As if nothing had happened an even bigger crown was set up the next year. How was this crown made?

The young men got a 10 – 12 meter long thin tree trunk from the woods and then peeled it nice and smooth. For the crown three iron hoops were vertically placed into each other and connected by a horizontal loop in the middle. All loops were then soldered together. This resulted in a strong framework that the maidens decorated with winter green into which they mixed flowers from the fields and gardens. Two days earlier they, along with the older girls, already went through the meadows and picked beautiful marguerites, bell flowers, and what else the summer had to offer.

p. 281

Picture of a crown at end of this chapter.

p.282

The wintergreen they got from the woods on the "Hill". Sunday morning the crown was attached to the "Kronenholz" (wooden support) and stood up in front of the school by some of the young men and older boys. A one and a half meter hole had been dug for this purpose. Along with the crown a rope was put up at the upper end of the crown tree that reached down all the way down to the ground. Within the crown tree there are also two "Rasthölzer" (staffs to provide a rest or short pause), these are two horizontal staffs that extend to a length of 25 centimeter on the side. One is below the crown, the other in half height.

The festival was opened with two dances that were danced in traditional church costumes in the presence of all church goers. After lunch all young people arrived for the dance. When a considerable number of visitors had taken a seat on the benches which had been placed around the dance floor the high point of the day arrives: the "Climbing up the Crown". With the help of the suspended rope a lad climbs into the crown— in the old times this was the "Altknecht" (Leader of the "Burschen" (young men). The "Rasthölzer" served him to catch a breath on the arduous way up. Once he sits in the crown people become quiet down below and everyone listens to the words of his speech, the "Kruinapradich" that he directs at the assembly. When he has finished the leadership of the "Maidens" (young women) attaches a plate with pastries and a bottle of wine to the rope that he can pull up to strengthen himself. The speech does not have a fixed, rigid form, but touched upon the actual questions of the day, luck and sorrows of the community as it just happened. Therefore each time the speech was not the same as the one before, different after the war as compared to before the war. Twenty years ago it sounded something like this:

"God the Lord we want to thank:

- that He has sustained us in hard times up to this day;
- that He has protected us from war and death, from floods and fires,
from failed harvest and severe weather.

May He continue to watch over us!

p. 283

But if a heavier load was put on one or the other than we had wished for, we still give thanks for the force He gave us, so that we can carry the burden.

God, the Lord, we want to thank:

- For the daily bread, that we were able to receive from his mild hand,
- even when we were no longer allowed to plow, place seeds, and harvest,
- but have to work machines in factories or carry out other work.

P. 282

God, the Lord, we want to thank:

- That he gave us faithful parents, who brought us up and kept us from harm,

- that we were led to a path of virtue in a Christian community.
- May He give a long life to our parents!

God, the Lord, we want to thank:

- That He led us on the path of faith through the education and sermons of a loyal chaplain,
- that He gave him men standing by his side to be examples and to care for peace and unity with gentle words.
- May He give a long life to the leader of the community and the "Presbyter"!

God, the Lord, we want to thank:

- For our beautiful homeland, for mountains and valleys, meadows, and fields
- Also for the leaders of the country, that they fight evil and promote good.
- May He give them strength and love, so that they reign in peace and justice, treat and protect all citizens equally so that they can live in peace and freedom, full of joy and happiness!

God, the Lord, we want to thank:

- For the community of young people and for today's festival. Outside the fields ripen in His glory! Let us think about that we also ripen for eternity!

May the Lord bless us for this!

p. 285

Now let us be happy and full of joy, let us delight in play, song, and dance, and don't forget, that the entertainment is only beautiful if we meet each other with respect and love. 'Vivat!' The youth, the musicians and all our guests shall live high (sie sollen hoch leben)!"

Lovely sounds of a waltz invited the youth to a dance. On this day the maidens chose the dancer. It was a dance of May. Not only had the ladies the right to choose, but also the whole responsibility for the festival. They had to hire the music band, order catering, and secure money to pay them by asking the dancers for a contribution and also solicit donations from the audience.

In describing the crown it is noticeable that its form is not so much a crown but a sphere, which is more like the ball of the sun. This would allow concluding that this tradition likely was a summer solstice festival. For a harvest celebration the time would be several weeks too early, since the time for harvesting began only three weeks later.

When the harvesting of wheat was finished in the fall another tradition existed. From the most beautiful ears of wheat from the field a double cross was tied with two crossbeams at equal height. To view it from above or from one side there was always one cross to be seen. It was to be given to the farmer's wife as she returned home from the field. This gesture did not occur without a due reward for the reapers. Therefore she already had hurried home at the vesper (supper) time as soon it had become clear that the harvest had come to an end. To secure the end of this hallowed work the community had prepared itself by celebrating the Last Supper. Arrived at home she got a large pot, stirred a thin dough from flour, milk, and eggs and ignited a lively fire in the kitchen stove. When the harvest workers gave her the cross she invited them to come to the table forthwith. While the workers washed their hands she put the cross on a place of honor in the front room where it stayed until the next harvest.

But then she put a large plate on the table upon which the most beautiful pancakes piled up and asked all to help themselves without shame. The farmer also had not been tardy to go into the basement and putting a jug of the "Bruit:achtal" on the table for the hard-working reapers. A round of drink was always given when a job was finished. And for that there were plenty of occasions until the 11th of November when "der Martin auf dem weissen Ross geritten kam" (St. Martin arrived on the white horse), that is: winter closed in on the land. Sometimes it surprised the farmer finishing the last works in the vineyard.

For the women the arrival of winter suited them very well, because then they could sit on their spinning wheel and spin their hemp. With how much diligence and resilience this work was carried out is shown by the practice that they not only spun until late in the evening, went at it again into the "Morjagas" early in the morning, but often also during the night "die Nacht versuchten" (stayed up all night). This was not done only by a single person, but they came together in spin rooms (Rockenstube), separated into age groups. Lively conversation, exchange of the latest news in the community and their environment kept the sleep away from them. The longest night of the year on the 21st of December, the "Thomasnacht" (night of Thomas) was always spent awake. It was also called the "Ganjzelnacht". The young people did this with special fun and special expectations. Early on the Maidens (young women) and Burschen (young men) gathered in the largest house of a maid in the spin room. On this evening the last hemp had to be spun because the "Feiertage" (days of Christmas) were coming and after the New Year the linen was woven. It was said that the yarn would not only be thin, but also be unbreakable through the magic forces that were active in this night. But even more it counted that every young woman hoped to learn who was going to be her man in the future. The expectations of the mother would only in so far be met that the daughter no longer had any more hemp of her spinning wheel when she brought it home. If they were not successful to spin their "Ganjzalrokan" (spinning wheel, distaff) empty, her dearest burned the rest with a burning match which could have given her mother cause for dissatisfaction and even reproach.

It could also happen that her lad set an end to spinning by destroying the spinning wheel. Until the next fall he had enough time to carve a new one. But if the young woman owned an especially valuable spinning wheel, deriving from the family heritage, or, if her dearest man was not present, then she made a short vine stem into a "Ganjzalrokan" that she did not need to feel sorry about if it was broken. But there was also a deeper cause which was not talked about, although it was more important. The man, who wanted to become her lover and desired to have her as his woman, had to pass a test of strength this night. He could not be a weakling, he had to be able to break the stem of a vine. But before that, another custom was in use that created a lot of fun for the young people.

Shortly before midnight the maidens wrapped themselves with white linen, belted themselves with a black rope and started to go to the creek so that they were there when the clock tower rang twelve. Each of them carried a small empty pot with their hands. If the creek was frozen they cut a hole in the ice with an ax they had brought with them. On the way to the creek no word was allowed to be uttered and every tree on the way had to be circled from left to right. After having arrived at the creek they spoke in a chorus: "All good spirits praise God, the Master!" Then they scooped water into their small pots which had to be silently done not against but with the flow of water. In the same manner as they had come they returned, one after the other, to their shelter where they placed the pots with water on the stove. Until the water in it boiled they prepared dough with flour and some of the water adding a trace of ash. Every maid wrote the name of one of three young men from whom they had not rejected a marriage proposal on one of three pieces of paper and hid them in a

little lump they had formed from the water and flour in the pot. As soon as the water in the pot began to boil they put the small dumplings into the water. Nobody knew which names were inside them. When the first dumpling rose the owner took him out, opened it, read it, and kept the name a secret.

p. 287

Only later, on the day of Fasching (carnival) the result of this secret lottery ticket was lifted when the maidens asked for the young men's caps to sew a bouquet on it. Oh, what dismay when one of the men received two bouquets! This could result in hurt and strife among the maidens, but often jealousies were avoided and the peace was kept. Today this tradition is no longer in use. Nobody still believes that a decision for life is made by a playful lottery. But it was a lot of fun. All were cheered up and continued with their work until morning.

With these traditions an old legacy was preserved through centuries. The region of its occurrence stretches from the Pyrenees to Syria, and in the middle of it is Siebenbürgen. According to J. Grimm young women in the Pyrenees prophesied from the spring water, that, on a morning of May, they had collected from three running fountains before dawn on Sunday and had lit a candle in front of it. From Kassel (a German town) Schmidt-Reichenfels, reports: (based on the same source) "dass baden in Druselwasser als heilsam gerühmt sei, es müsse aber mit dem Lauf geschöpft werden. Die rechte Zeit sei Walpurgis, d.h. 1.Mai oder die Johannisnacht." (bathing in spring water supposedly is praised for its healing power, but it has to be scooped up with the flow of the water. The right time is during the night of Walpurgis, the first of May or during the night of Johannis). In Syria it is believed that water, scooped up on the first day of Easter, does not spoil, rejuvenates people, heals eczemas, and strengthens young cattle. Origin and distributions of these old rituals remain in darkness. According to their geographic distribution one could assume that they were of Celtic heritage because once their area of residence reached from Syria to the Pyrenees and our ancestral home also lay in it. But this question is not of such great significance as stating the fact that such an old tradition like the "Ganzalnuacht", the night of St. Thomas, was celebrated in Grosskopisch up until fifty years ago.

About the description "ganjzal" can safely be said that it is of Germanic origin. In the "Gramatisch-Kritisch Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart" by Joh, Christian Adelung, 2. Teil, from 1796, we find on page 407 to "ganz": "Otfried uses 'ganz' and 'ganzer' for healthy, 'Ganzida' for health, 'Unganzi' means sickness.

p. 288

Ulfila (bishop of the Visigoths, who from 350 to 360 translated the bible into Gothic) uses "ganisan" for "genesen"(recuperate), "ganz werden" (become whole again). In the "Mittel-Niederdeutschen Wörterbuch" by K. Schiller and Dr. Aug. Lüben, 2nd vol. from 1876, one reads to: "ganzen" from "ganz, heil machen von Krankheit, wie auch von Sünden" (whole, healing from disease and also from sin). For this a third source shall be cited here: J. and W. Grimm: Deutsches Wörterbuch (German Dictionary), vol. 4 from 1878, page 1287, it reads: "GANZ – integer –totus – ahd. (Old High-German) is attested as "ganzen" mnl. (Middle Netherlands), "gansen" (healing), and a little further it states: "already in the 12th century the emigrants took with them from the Low Rhine region to Haltrich Sieb. "entginzen" = "verrenken" (dislocate), mhd. (Middle High-German) "entgenzen".

After that now one cannot consider the meaning of the "Ganzalnuacht" other than as "Night of Healing". It is also to recognize that a part of the old ritual apparently became lost, because the water was no longer used for healing as it is still the tradition in Syria or also in Baden (Spa in Austria). In Baden it is called "Heiliwog". The Baden dictionary explains to this: "Heiliwog" is water that brings salvation, Holy water that is scooped from the fountain at midnight on Christmas

Night, and from it one gives to the sick, also pours some into the water for the cattle to prevent disease, also add it to wine and vinegar so that they don't spoil. In Baden this ritual was set for the Holy Night, while it is practiced during summer solstice in Grosskopisch. Thus its pagan origin has been proven with certainty.

After that only a few days remain until the mysterious time of Advent that not only fills the hearts of the children but also of the adults with yearning for light and joy, peace and love, for the Lord. For several decades now a wreath of Advent, bound by the young women, hangs in the church, whose burning candles count on Sunday the passing weeks of waiting. During the long hours of dusk joyous singing sounds through the houses, and when Christmas Eve arrives the bright candle light refracts it in shining eyes. On this evening nobody can resist the call of the bells, stay home and close off one's heart from the message of luck and happiness brought in this night.

p. 289

Even obstinate sceptics sit in the shiny light of the Christmas tree and listen to the songs and poems of the children, remembering their own childhood. The children refused to obey orders given by authorities who were assigned by the party and were enticing the children by bribes or threats not to take a part in the celebration. With the sounds of the song: "Nun danket alle Gott mit Herzen, Mund und Händen..." (Now let us thank the Lord with heart, mouth and hands...) the children received gifts. This they would have earned abundantly because they all were full of joy there and to share their joy with the adults. Crystal clear sounded their voices with the songs:

Alle Jahre wieder kommt das Christuskind...(Every year the Christ child comes...)

Lasst uns das Kindlein grüssen und fallen ihm zu Füßen...(Let us greet the child and fall at his feet...)

Wach, Nachtigall, wach auf...(Wake up, nightingale, wake up...)

Kommet ihr Hirten, ihr Männer und Frau'n...(Come, shepherds, you men and women...)

Maria durch ein' Dornwald ging...(Mary went through a forest of thorns...)

Freu dich Erd' und Sternenzelt! Hallelujah! Gottes Sohn kam in die Welt...(Joy to you, earth and tent of the sky, the son of God came into the world...)

In between songs, they competed with reciting poems about Christmas.

After giving the Christmas presents to the children at which time the smaller siblings were taken by the hand and led around the altar, everybody went home where a small celebration in the home was held. The Christmas tree that had been introduced into the religious ritual after 1837 had its place also at the family's celebration. In Grosskopisch the tree replaced the candle stick. Even at the early morning service, that was held at 5 o'clock on the first Christmas day in the old days, the candle stick had been given up. Up until then, four candle holders were placed in the church. Around each a group of young people and children lined up to sing to laud and praise the Lord's grace in alternation.

The Holy Night after that is being spent in silence. The children, however, experience an exciting joy when the "Christmann" with his little bell and a sack on his back goes from house to house to laud the well-behaved, to scold the wicked-ones, and in the end gives presents generously.

p. 290

Eleven o'clock at night the larger of the bell in the tower begins to ring. Shortly before twelve o'clock the ringing stops. Then, when the tower clock has announced midnight with soft beats, dampened by snow on the roof, the brass

choir of the adjutants begins with the melody of an old song, known to all, the "Puer natus" (A child is born). This song is alternately sung and played, first in Latin and then in German:

The melody and text are printed here in the original form.

p. 291

After the song the Adjutants sing as a quartet:

Weihnachtslied

"O du heilige, selige Nacht!...."

p. 291

Both songs were sung over the village in three directions, that is south, west, and north. When the sounds fade away, the lights in the houses go out. Before the villagers had gas heat, the "Christnachtstlötzchen" (Christ night log) s. "Krästgrimpaskan" glowed on in the oven, in earlier times on the stove, until morning. This was not no longer considered as a "Julblock", as once upon a time in Scandinavia, England, or Lithuania, but simply because the night was so dark and cold. The old pagan beliefs had long been abandoned and replaced by a redeeming Christian faith. At no time in the year there is more love given and received as on Christmas.

But a soon as the first day of celebration has passed, pagan superstitions steps forward again in the valuation of the so-called "Lostage" from the 24th of December to the 6th of January. Some elders meticulously appraised the weather on these days and were willing to predict the weather for the months ahead where each day corresponded to the months in sequence. Other people made a so-called "Zwiebelkalender" (onion calendar), from which they deciphered the individual months of the coming year. They cut a fat onion into a half, took down the layers one by one, put twelve of them in a line and sprinkled a little salt into these newly formed little bowls. If water collected in one or more of them the next day it signified a wet month.

These days people think of it as little as they think of a loud crack of a whip with which in the old days one thought to be able to oust evil ghosts on New Year's Eve so that they could not inflict any damage to the people. Something, however, has remained from this tradition, the "Neujahrsmann" (man of the New Year) s. Gauarschmuun, who threatens the small children with a whip, sometimes leaves behind a switch to punish them if ...! But the children are all good. No mother would reveal their children's naughtiness to such a menacing figure.

p. 293

Nevertheless, the whip remained a symbol of the only protection and umbrella against the evil in and around us, and was seen as a helper and savior for every need to whom one ought to give thanks not only at the time of beginning and end of each year, but also during the time of one's life. This awareness also finds its expression in the extraordinarily large number of visitors to the church on New Year's Day. Nobody wanted to cross the threshold of the New Year without putting one's destiny into the hand of God and entrust himself and his family to the grace of the Eternal.

Herewith the second cycle of traditions and customary rituals that accompany the members of our community through the year is completed. I have attempted to record what is known to me. This was not done by me in the belief that this is or was only the common property of Grosskopisch. These rituals were widely distributed. They were, more or less adjusted locally, the common property of our people. For that reason alone they ought to be preserved. They show the tenacity of our fathers to keep the handed-down legacy alive. Our ancestors were emotionally motivated and formed by

their traditions. Through their traditions they experienced the power of their community that enabled them to live in a foreign country during centuries of an ever- changing history of the region.

281



Die Krone